

Howard Miller's Opinions.

EDITORS EVANGELIST: Some person, unknown, recently sent me a copy of the Progressive paper, the first I have seen for a long time, and in looking it over I see familiar names and read familiar utterances in its columns. On a rainy day with the paper before me I write a letter on the inspiration of the hour. It has been about ten years since I first began my acquaintance with the church, and less than that since I identified myself with the body. During that time vast changes have taken place. Schools have been started, schisms have come about, men have gone up and down and out, and many are the shiftings of the kaleidoscope I have personally witnessed. To me the following of the church's recent history is like reading a novel of intense and absorbing interest, in which the characters are impracticable and the plot impossible. Pause at any given page and no man can tell what will come next, because the story is not amenable to the rules that govern other and live people. Inside the last few years we have been disrupted, and three bodies are in existence, each claiming to be the only genuine and original edition. If there be such a thing as an original economy and church polity, characterizing the body known to the world as Dunkards, then the old Brethren have it and nobody else has. Anybody who denies this simply does not know what he is talking about. The folly of either the progressive or conservative party, with their schools, churches, missions, bells, organs, etc., claiming to represent the faith and practices of the primitive brethren of fifty years ago, must be a rare piece of Munchausenism to the octogenarian brother. As well might the city Methodists, with a hundred thousand dollar church, a paid choir to sing "I know my Redeemer liveth," to the music of an organ as big as a small country school house, claim to be the embodiment of the practices of Wesley and Peter Cartwright. As to the value of the methods of the original brethren, while I am sure the old order people have them, I am in doubt whether they were for the best then, I know they are not right now, and in my opinion, they never will be. Nevertheless they are entirely honest, which is a great deal more than can be said of some of the rest of us.

The causes that led to the rupture of the Fraternity are of the churches' own making through its product, the preachers. When a congregation gets together and elects a man to the ministry, with the capacity of a quart cup, they must not expect him to measure a gallon at one dip. If he has neither education nor capacity for mental improvement, they must not revile the dull, wire-edged blade of their own forging. When they multiply preachers of varying ability, they multiply centres of disturbance. Theoretically they work together; practically, they don't do any thing of the kind, as far as my experience goes. I never could understand what any congregation meant by turning out a lot of diverse figure-heads, and then expect them to weigh, measure, look and think alike, and out of this blindness has grown our double and triple organizations. The question of a supported ministry can never reach anything like a deserving success in a church where there are half a dozen applicants, ex officio, for the place. The editorial in the paper before me, dated June 2, 1884, gives \$300, as about the approximate figures for the minister to receive, and quotes the Evangelical Association, as an example, failing, however, to say that that body is not nearly as wealthy as any branch of our own. The same editorial quotes the oft repeated fact that our people are not educated up to giving, and this expression, in better and more expressive English means that they have not had stinginess and covetousness weeded out of them yet to that extent which forbids them taking unpaid labor. And it seems from the article by B. L. Gordon, of the same issue, that the plank of a supported ministry, in the Progressive platform, has not that physical tangibility about it that was anticipated. I don't think that any of you can tell me anything new about this phase of the church, as I have had the experience, at least, and I hope you may all live and prosper until I repeat my part of the farce. Should the Progressive branch of the church hold together for the next fifty years this three hundred dollar business will be very interesting reading to the clerical graduate of Ashland college, who, with eyeglasses, a gold-headed cane the sisters gave him, the clergyman's sore throat, and a trip to the seaside in hot weather, has charge of the city church. But, some one says, what is the use of looking ahead fifty years, and it is not going to happen that way anyhow. Of course not! Oh no! It never did happen in other churches. I'm mistaken about it.

I have never yet read an article anticipating these changes, and saying anything in the way of preventing them. He who would write it would get laughed at and receive the

patronizing condolence of the wise heads in charge. The most perfect religious organization in the world is the Roman Catholic, and who ever saw that body letting things go slipshod? But, then, the Brethren's church, in any of its forms, never regarded the experience of the world as of any value, having too much superior goodness and superlative wisdom within itself.

After all is said is not the entire church merely a drop in the bucket? During the last year I have traveled nearly all over the South, and, in fact, write this letter in New Orleans. The Brethren, of any brand are entirely unknown here, and in adjoining States. If there is anything in the church that renders it a distinctive body it is the ability to hold to its peculiarities as a church organization. To bring the church here with its recent innovations and then proclaim it that of a peculiar people, might well provoke the inquiry as to the difference between it and any other small sect, and it would require a rare logician to show the real differences in kind if not in degree. It is true of individuals that errors and sins of omission or commission may be remedied under future temptations, but this is never true of organizations. Perhaps many of the readers know what is meant by the phrase "slipping a cog," in a piece of machinery, and how impossible it is to restate the wheels without taking the whole thing apart. The application of this lies in the fact that in the last decade a good many cogs in the theological fabric have been irretrievably jumped and every facility offered for a continuance of the occurrence.

Hold the church by every check known, and it will gradually fall away from the original standard, and when such enormous facilities for departure as our schools permit, are allowed to pass without note or comment, I am astounded, and wonder why no man has ever raised his voice against what has produced more schisms and iconoclasts than the whole world besides. Had the church at large but a tithe of its vaunted wisdom it would have foreseen the outcome of a half a dozen papers allowed to run riot and race up and down the old highway. They produced division, and had the church, now, the ability to cope with a similar question there would be but one school controlled by the organization and it would not be in diametric opposition to the teachings of its fostering mother. Our schools, uncontrolled, will produce varying systems of scholastic theology before long and each one will constitute the nucleus of a distinct sect. Ask your nearest intelligent German Reformed brother what he knows of Mercersburg theology and how it came about. One remedy for this trouble lies in a more compact system of government. A strong central form of government is for the best in the church world just the same as it is in politics. The theory of congregational government is as erroneous as that of State rights. Congregational government usually means the government of a church by a preacher and his family relations, common or central government means a control of the preacher and his congregation by the entire body.

Finally, with a sincere wish for the ultimate success of the methods and agencies best calculated to advance the interests of the great cause, I hope that each reader may better equip himself for the journey to that land where there are no divisions nor disputes as to who or what is right. Should any person desire to write me my address is below.

HOWARD MILLER.

Lewisburgh, Union Co., Pa.

Criticism and Reply.

U. M. BEACHLY,
Meyersdale, Pa.

In your article headed "Dedication at Mechanicsburg, Pa.," published in the EVANGELIST, No. 33, you say: "That when they followed God's behests they were invariably blessed with peace and plenty, but as soon as they demurred—set up a golden calf or their own notions, placed the ark on an ox cart, instead of carrying it, or as now, make a shabby coat or Dunkard bonnet a test of membership, having the audacity to pervert the spirit or animus of the gospel of Christ, engendering and practicing hate instead of love, demoralizing and disorganizing the church—on such actions the blessing of God will not rest," &c. Whether the language here quoted is brother Wilt's or your own, I do not care to know. Will you not hesitate a moment and see whether you have not yourself been setting up a "golden calf," or your own notions against the will of God? Will the publication of such articles redound "to the glory of God?" Is not the disorganized condition of the church to day, the result of the publication of just such backbiting as your article contains? I wait for a reply.

A. BRUMBAUGH.

New Baltimore, Ohio.

REPLY BY DR. BEACHLY.

Brother Editor EVANGELIST; I enclose you the above from Elder Brumbaugh with my answer, as follows:

You ask two questions.
1st. Will the publication of such articles redound to the honor and glory of God?

2nd. Is not the disorganized condition of the church to day the result of the publication of just such back-biting as your articles contains?

And make one charge in the form of an interrogation, "Have not (you) yourself been setting up a golden calf or your own notions against the will of God?"

I reply first to the charge. If the Gospel of Christ is a "Golden Calf," and annual meeting the "Will of God" then I plead guilty to your charge, not otherwise. I deny both, are you willing to affirm? If so, you have the floor for the opening speech.

Now to your question, "Will the publication of such articles redound to the honor and glory of God?" Answer—I sincerely hope it will. My reason for believing so is because it is God's plan to cry out against all forms of wickedness and sin. Evil doers must be reproved sharply so that they will repent of the evil and turn unto the Lord. Are you not posted on the doings of the annual meeting elders? Do you not know that they are guilty of all that is charged against them, and more too? If you believe it to be true and right why should you question the propriety of publishing it? If such things as making the shabby coat and Dunkard bonnet a test of fellowship is right, why keep the fact under a bushel, but if it is wrong why should it not redound to the honor and glory of God to denounce it publicly, as it has been God's plan to do with wrong doing ever since the murder of Able was branded on the forehead of Cain. The parties alluded to have driven us out of house and home in the church, or sought to do so, for no violation of the Gospel, and yet this persecuting spirit which knows no restraint outside of the civil law, must go unrebuked?

2nd. To your second question I answer, that the disorganized condition of the church is the result of such publication, just as the flood and the destruction of the Antediluvians was the result of Noah's preaching; or the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea was due to Moses and Aaron; or the drought in Ahab's day was due to Elijah; or the destruction of the Jews was due to the preaching of the apostles; or the disorganized condition of the Roman Catholic Church was due to Luther and other reformers. Paul was denounced as a pestilent fellow in his day, and Herod was worshipped as a God. You look upon annual meeting as representing the will of God, though its decisions are some of them contrary alike to Gospel and good common sense, and inconsistent, and self-contradictory throughout. And because we do not bow the knee and cry out, Great is annual meeting, or meekly submit to being robbed of our church property, and other indignities, we are blamed for being trouble makers and pestilent fellows. You are like the cross boy who stirred the bees to spite his mother, because she had given him needed reproof, and then blamed it all on his mother because he got stung.

U. M. BEACHLY.

Meyersdale, Pa.

Notes and Jottings.

Saturday morning, September 6th, we were taken by one of our good brethren to the railroad station, enroute for Perry county, Ohio, where it was understood that on the day following; i. e. Sunday, Sept. 7th, a building recently erected, by the Brethren living in the vicinity of Glenford, was to be dedicated to the service of God. We were met at the depot in Thornport, by brother Ben. Foster, and taken to our aged and afflicted brother Samuel Helsers.

Brother Helsers has suffered a stroke of paralysis recently, and has not yet recovered from the painful effects. He is strong in the faith of Jesus if not in body. Here we rested for the night, and in the morning arose feeling much better than we have for weeks. We had prayed for strength to do the Master's work upon this occasion and thank the good Lord our prayers were answered. The hour of 10 a. m. had been named for the dedicatory service to begin, and, ere the hour came, the new church house was filled to overflowing; the crowd was estimated from 800 to 1,000 people. The Brethren have done nobly here. They are mostly poor in this world's goods, yet they built a house 34x52, and nicely furnished everything. We would like to write down in this correspondence the names of some here who deserve special credit for their sacrifices, but we leave that to the recording angel in Heaven. Rest assured, my dear brethren, that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. There was a small delinquency but after we took up the usual collection, the church was made free from incumbrance; and the church was dedicated, and christened "Bethel." We tried to preach last evening to a very large audience; more than could be accommodated in the church.

We go from here to Hocking county, Ohio,

to dedicate another temple to God's service, Sabbath, Sept. 15th, when you will hear from us again. Thus you see the good work is going on among the people of the Lord. Brother J. P. Martin was with us here and expects to be with us the coming week.

We attended a singing in the new church on Saturday evening, held by the young people of this place, under the preceptorship of our young friend Adam Helsers, son of brother Samuel, alluded to above. It was a good, soul-cheering singing. We made the remark that, it would be a great pity should even one of those sweet singers fail to swell the chorus in heaven. Our dear young sister Hattie Leach, was missed among the singers; we not only missed her, but the singers lament her absence. She was present at every meeting last autumn when we held a series of meetings here, but now she lies low with disease. We visited her yesterday and shall visit her again ere we leave. We hope for her recovery.

R. F. MALLOTT.

From Clinton County.

Away down here in the corner of our good old Clinton county, Ind., lies the beautiful little village of Edna Mills. Banked on one side by an elm bordered brook, and on the other surrounding sides by wooded hills and undulating fields, it is well worthy the name of "Paradise on earth."

But here, as elsewhere, the devil pays his call, (it has the appearance at times, of his established residence) and the result has been obvious. Dissensions have arisen, sectional convictions have broken the original brotherhood, churchings, wordy wars and personal disputations have, in a great measure, tended to convert this otherwise delightful settlement into a second "Paradise Lost."

Now mark the following and note results: Last winter at the earnest solicitation of a few personal friends, brother Swihart was induced to spend a week with us, and preach to us the word of God. But the brother was in ill health, and only, therefore, preached five sermons. Six of us united with the brethren church at the time, and attached ourselves to the Burlington congregation.

Brethren Gordon and Seawright sustained a series of monthly meetings at this place during the past spring and summer. Last month brother Swihart, being much improved in health, commenced his labor in this section of the country, beginning near Transitville, about eight miles from Edna Mills.

From Transitville brother S. came to us, as per agreement when he should have recovered his health, and resumed his work in great earnest. After a very few evenings, the church was crowded to its utmost capacity with people eager to hear the gospel proclaimed in all its beauty and purity.

The brother preached the word with such power, God standing by him, that after a few days the Revival Wave began to roll and sinners turned to God from all directions. This caused great rejoicing among the few Brethren here, and now instead of nine members, (here and at Transitville) to stand the storms, as we have been obliged to do, we show a goodly record of even forty-three, with doubtless more to follow.

On several occasions the crowd was estimated at from seven to eight hundred.

Many prominent citizens were heard to say, "There is no use in talking! If the gospel is true, they have got it." Criticisms were offered for a few days, but were finally withdrawn, none having the temerity to cross the swords of wit, satire or religion with the redoubtable Swihart.

Thus the "trail of the serpent" has ceased to be over our Eden, and, by God's grace, we rejoice in "Paradise Regained." Your unworthy brother,

WILLIAM CRIPE.

Dedication of a Church.

At an expenditure of \$1,656 Mr. D. C. Ulery has erected a church three miles south of the city for the Brethren church, and the neighbors have contributed liberally toward its furnishing, so that the edifice stands completed and furnished, clear of debt and ready for dedication. The grounds upon which the church stands, one-half acre, was presented to the church by Mrs. Laura Stull, wife of Mr. William Stull, and all honor is due the noble lady for her generous donation. The building is 56x34 feet, and is the finest church in the county outside of the cities and towns. The entrance is through large double doors, ten feet wide. On either side the central aisle at the front is a large room ten feet deep. Two rows of stained mahogany seats are between the two side and the large centre aisle. A capacious gallery extends over the two rooms in the front part of the building. The dedicatory services are to be performed on Sunday morning next, at ten o'clock, by Rev. J. W. Fitzgerald. The public is cordially invited to attend the services.—*South Bend Evening Register.*